DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 114 CS 506 026

AUTHOR Ross, Roseanna G.
TITLE Ethical Considerations for the Internship Director.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (73rd, Boston, MA, November 5-8, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Responsibility; *Ethical Instruction; *Ethics; Experiential Learning; Higher Education; *Internship Programs; Interpersonal Relationship; Speech Communication; Student Experience; *Supervision
IDENTIFIERS Speech Communication Education

ABSTRACT

Although a growing number of speech communication departments are developing internship programs, the ethical issues involved are rarely addressed, even though communication interns and intern directors are potentially involved in ethical issues merely by their involvement in the discipline of communication. There are three areas to consider from an ethical perspective: program issues, professional issues, and intern and director relationship issues. The discussion of internship ethics evolves primarily from a descriptive ethics perspective, with descriptive ethics considered as "telling people where they are" and making it necessary to "analyze the important and difficult decisions made by the more respected members of that profession." Ethical implications in program areas may be found in students' course preparation, student selection, student placement, recruiting, and evaluation. In the area of professional issues, ethical questions include those of allegiance and legality. Concerning intern relationship issues, the director's role is to accommodate the intern's learning experience, yet this may be affected by conflicting personalities, or by the director's imposition of personal values and ethical perspectives. Because of these concerns, intern directors must become knowledgeable about major ethical perspectives, and assess and define their own ethical perspectives, thereby becoming aware of the influence of those perspectives on the decision-making process. In addition, directors should be responsible to assist interns in establishing ethical guidelines to help in their decision-making. (Ten scenarios presenting samples of interns' ethical concerns are included, and 21 references are appended.) (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED291114

Ethical Considerations for the Internship Director

presented by

Roseanna G. Ross, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Speech Communication
Internship Director

St. Cloud State University
Speech Communication Department
St. Cloud, MN 56301

Paper presented to the Speech Communication Annual Meeting, November, 1987, Boston, Massachusetts

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Roseanna G. Ross

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS506026

In recognizing the need to prepare speech communication graduates to enter nonacademic positions, a growing number of speech communication departments are developing internship programs. The development of these programs is still relatively young, with little systematic research on development, administration or impact. Articles published in speech communication journals reflect this recentness by focusing primarily on justifications/rationales for speech communication internships and on strategies for developing such programs (Cahn, 1979; Downs, Harper & Hunt, 1976; Hanson, 1984; Harper, 1982; Holley, 1980; Hyre & Owens, 1984; Jamieson & Wolvin, 1976; Konsky, 1977; Mason, 1985; Wilson, 1980; Ross, 1986, 1987).

Nowhere reflected in these writings is a concern for, or discussion of, ethical issues and considerations for internship directors. Yet, ethics should be of concern to the internship director not only because every communicative act can be seen as "having an ethical component" (Nilson, 1966), but also because of the type and focus of the relationship between intern and director. The purpose of this paper is not to prescribe ethical standards for internship directors, but to address ethical issues relevant to speech communication internship directors. This paper will explore this thesis through: 1. defining relevant terms; 2. discussing the importance of ethics as related to internships; 3. introducing areas of ethical concern for the director; 4. introducing areas of ethical concern for the intern;

and 5. discussing implications for directors of internship programs.

Definition of Terms

Because internship terminology is highly variable, the following definitions apply for the focus of this paper:[1]

Internship - applies to any structured practical professional experience under the supervision of qualified academic and agency personnel for academic credit. Also referred to as practicum, field work and work experience, an internship is distinct from independent study or independent research.

Departmental Director - is the intern coordinator or director in the academic setting. Duties include: developing of application and evaluation procedures; screening and sometimes matching students with sites; disseminating internship information; clarifying roles of intern, agency and faculty; developing agency site network. For this discussion, "director" will also refer to the person who works closely with the student during the internship. Some programs utilize faculty supervisors in the role of direct department supervision of the intern; ethical issues discussed are also relevant to these faculty supervisors.

Agency - refers to any business, government, social service facility, educational institution or other unit which accepts interns.

Agency Supervisor - person at the job site who is directly in charge of supervising students during the internship; this person

provides feedback to the intern and to the director concerning intern progress and modification of internship program.

In addition to internship terminology, it is necessary to also define how the term "ethics" will be used in this discussion. Nilson (1966, p. 10) defines ethics as "systematic thinking and theorizing with respect to questions about good, right and wrong, and moral obligation. Jensen (1985, p. 324) defines ethics as the "moral responsibility involved in making intentional and voluntary choices in oughtness in relation to basic values such as rightness, justice, goodness, truthfulness and virtue." Johannesen (1983, p. 1) notes that "ethical judgments focus more precisely on degrees of rightness and wrongness in human behavior.

Howell (1982, p. 188) differentiates between prescriptive and descriptive ethics noting that prescriptive ethics are "injunctions such as codes of ethics [which] tell people where they as a society would like to be;" whereas descriptive ethics "tell people where they are" demanding an assessment of the "ongoing ethics of a profession" making it necessary to "analyze the important and difficult decisions made by the more respected members of that profession." This discussion of internship ethics will evolve primarily from a descriptive perspective; no formalized code of ethics exists for speech communication internship programs at this time, and the approach to this discussion will not be to prescribe standards of behavior.

Relationship Between Ethics and Communication Internships

By the very act of communicating, persons are potentially involved in ethical issues. Nilsen (1966, p. 86) notes that "except in the case of the most trivial of utterances, we make ethical choices virtually every time we speak. Johannesen (1983) develops this concept further when he notes that:

> Potential ethical issues are inherent in any instance of communication between humans to the degree that the communication can be judged on a right-wrong dimension, involves possible significant influence on other humans, and to the degree that the communicator consciously chooses specific ends sought and communicative means to achieve those ends (p. 1-2).

So communication interns and intern directors are potentially involved in ethical issues merely by their involvement in the discipline of communication. Furthermore, in their communication to each other in the intern/director relationship, and in their communication in the agency, ethical issues may arise.

Directors of speech communication internships have a more deeply rooted ethical charge in their role as mentors and advisors. Anderson (1984) outlines this ethical responsibility of communication teachers.

> We [teachers of communication] have responsibility to identify the inexorable relationship between communication and ethics. We have responsibility to bring to the attention of our students, as well as people generally, the fact that their communication behavior is defining the way in which we live with one another... Can we pretend to be specialists in communication and fail to develop appreciation of the fact that there are multiple effects of every communication interchange? (p. 227)

Not only is there an ethical charge for directors of communication interns because of the nature of the communication discipline, their communicative relationship with interns, and their role as teacher, but also because of the character of "internship" itself. The internship functions as an applied experience -- an opportunity to translate theory and research into practice, and to develop "technical skills" in the professional setting. So too then does the internship most likely offer to the student one of the first opportunities for applied ethics. Just as the internship challenges the intern to utilize public speaking, listening, group discussion and problem solving skills, the internship will most likely also challenge the intern to make (and to observe) communication choices involving ethical considerations. So the internship director is in the unique position of advising interns in the technical command of the entire gamut of communication, including ethics. Jensen (1985, p.2) charges that "in helping to train people to become better communicators we need to be deeply concerned that they not only improve their technical command of the subject matter and of their proficiency, but also deepen their sensitivity to the ethical dimensions of communicating."

So ethical issues are intrinsic to the internship experience, and a discussion of ethical considerations is strongly warranted.

Ethical Concerns for the Internship Director

The division of issues into "concerns for the director" and "concerns for the intern" is somewhat artificial, as intern concerns ultimately can become issues for the director and vice versa. But for the purpose of focus, let the acknowledging of the inter-relationship suffice.

Jensen (1970, p. 87) notes that the "area of ethics is so nebulous and controversial that it is quite impossible to set down any simple blueprint of what is or is not ethical in every situation." It is probably best to do as Jensen (1985) suggests, and consider the "Ethical Quality" asking "how ethical is it." Ultimately the goal of the internship is for both the director and the intern to develop an ethical and professional attitude toward their professions. For the internship director, the process of directing can also be a means by which the director tests his/her own ethics. Discussion of ethical considerations will introduce issues which the director may wish to consider from an ethical perspective, and will be focused in three areas: program issues; professional issues; intern relationship issues.

Program Issues

The director's charge is to be responsible for the academic integrity of the internship program. Some program areas which may have ethical implications are: students' course preparation, student selection, student placement, recruiting, and evalua-

tion. In student preparation, do the required courses in reality give the students the theory and skills needed to prepare for the internship? If not, how ethical is it to place these interns? In the selection of students, is consideration given to the "readiness" (regardless of required courses and student status) of the intern for the placement? How ethical is it to place an intern, or to encourage an intern to seek placement, who is not "ready", but meets placement criteria? How ethical is it for a director to decide which intern to send to which site (as opposed to letting intern or site supervisor select)? In recruiting, is the motivation to increase the size of the program or to suggest internships only for those students who actually can benefit? How unbiased is an internship director in promoting his/her own program? How ethical is it to suggest that all students intern? In the area of internship evaluation, is it possible to use specified criteria that can be applied uniformly to all internships? How ethical is it to give an "A" to an intern who performed well in a less challenging internship where the supervisor offered ongoing specific guidance and to give an "A" to an intern who performed well in an internship where the supervisor's guidance was minimal and the tasks were unfamiliar and challenging?

Professional Issues

The majority of internship directors do not receive specialized training for the position, yet are expected to perform competently. How ethical is it for a director to be directing

without a clear understanding of the legal aspects (eg...who assumes responsibility for an injured intern; how does an intern proceed in an instance of sexual harassment at the job site?) How ethical is it for a director to coordinate internship programs and supervise interns without an understanding of his own values and ethical perspectives? How ethical is it for the director to utilize internship job site contacts for his/her own personal advantage? The internship director is part of a system where the primary actors are the intern, supervisor, and director, in addition to the larger community comprised of the university, the site agency etc... Who is the supervisor's "client?" To whom does the intern director owe allegiance?

Intern Relationship Issues

The site agency's process, in most cases, is not designed to serve the intern. It is the director's role to accommodate, as much as possible, the intern's learning experience. The relationship between the intern and director is primarily a type of helping relationship where the director consults with and advises the intern with the ultimate goal of empowering the intern to make responsible decisions, to develop communication skills and insight through the experience, and to transfer book knowledge to experience. How much control should the director have in this relationship? What influence do the director's personality and character have on the outcome of the internship? How ethical is it for directors to tell interns how to solve their job site problems? How ethical is it to impose personal values/ethical

perspectives on interns? Are directors ethically bound to become advocates for interns? Are directors ethically bound to assist students in establishing ethical guidelines to help in their decision-making? How ethical is it for a director to divulge information given to him/her by an intern? By a site supervisor? Does an internship director refuse to approve an internship in an agency where the site supervisor gave a previous intern a "bad time" (denying the possibility that each communication relationship is unique)? If the director decides to approve, is it more ethical for the director to risk negatively influencing the intern's experience by warning the intern of potential problems to watch for, or for the director to let the intern establish his/her own relationship without a prior "mind set?" What is the ethical responsibility of a director who has strong negative feelings about an intern? Is a director ethically bound to confront a potential intern with his/her impressions of the student's behavior which "puts off" the director? How does a director deal with the intern when the hosting agency's philosophy is in conflict with the intern director's?

Ethical Concerns for the Intern

To many students, the internship experience is the first time they are forced to address their personal ethics. It begins with the decisions they make in designing their resumes, carries through their decisions in selecting agencies for application through the strategies for presenting themselves in interviews,

and through the numerous decisions that they make, and observe others making, in the work setting. Ethical issues which interns face on the job can range from confidentiality of information, to questioning the ethics of activities in which they are requested to engage, to questioning the ethics of behaviors of persons observed in the organization. At any point, the intern may turn to the director for advice or guidance. What will be the director's role at this point? What if the director sees no ethical problem, but the intern does? On the other hand, when students are unquestioningly engaged in activities which the director questions ethically, is it his/her duty to direct the student to address the ethical components of this behavior? Hanson (1984, p. 53) describes the intern as a young person "willing to do almost anything." If this is true, then the intern is in a potentially vulnerable position in the agency. What is the director's ethical responsibility to that intern? The following scenarios present samples of intern's ethical concerns which this author has encountered:

1. Mary is a bright student seeking a P.R. internship in a large corporation. You show her an ad for the ideal position in a corporation which, among its products, manufactures warheads. She declines to pursue that lead because with her feelings toward war she would have problems ethically working for that company.

2. Pat has made a contact during his present sales internship which looks to be a hot job lead. The contact offers him a position to be filled immediately; Pat still has three weeks left in his present internship.

3. Kathy is managing to cope well in her video internship but she has evidence that her supervisor

and other management are misleading a fellow employee concerning a potential job advancement. Kathy also thinks that her supervisor has not been completely honest with her concerning her work.

4. As part of his marketing internship with a convention center, Gene has been asked to do research on the competition's prices and package without revealing his affiliation. He uses the story that he's a college student doing a research paper; persons express sincere interest in his research and want copies of his paper. He's feeling uncomfortable in this role.

5. Kelly has a two quarter internship. After an intense first quarter, the second quarter seems redundant and offers no opportunity for growth. Kelly wants to leave the internship and is sure she can do so with support from the supervisor, even though her written agreement is for another five weeks.

6. Jane is interning in the personnel department of a high security prison for men. Whenever she walks outside of the office through areas where the prisoners are gathered, she receives "catcalls" and sexual remarks. She is very uncomfortable with this, yet realizes it happens to other women in the same setting.

7. Joan has known her supervisor personally, prior to the internship, for a number of years. During the internship, she decides his management style is ineffective; additionally she thinks he is taking advantage of the friendship to assign her to the dirtier, menial tasks, and later hours. One night at work she blows up, tells him off, and walks out.

8. Joe is working for a temporary placement agency. He has researched competing agencies in the area and identifies that all offer nearly the same service. He is asked to "sell" this agency as the best service to potential clients, yet feels uncomfortable doing this because he sees all the agencies as comparable.

9. Jenny is a very attractive woman and model who is interning in the personnel department of a large, conservative organization. In very open interactions with her supervisor discussing future employment beyond the internship, she has been told that she will weaken her opportunity for employment

as long as she dresses with "such class and femininity." She is advised to conform more to the organization's unwritten norm of navy blue suits, pumps, short hair, and little make up. She is angered by the suggestion, yet is faced with the decision of whether to conform in dress, or to continue in her style.

10. Bob is an intern with a political campaign. He is sent to copy materials at city hall because he is not a recognized member of the campaign and will therefore not draw attention to what he is copying nor will persons guard what they say in his presence.

These are just a few of the quarterly instances of potentially ethical issues which interns bring to this author's office. Few, if any of these scenarios, represent major ethical dilemmas of a far reaching or national scope. Yet, these do pose ethical dilemmas for the interns involved, or can function as excellent points for discussion of ethical implications for those interns who do not take into consideration the ethical implications of their decisions. The problem is not so much how the ethical issues are ultimately resolved but whether interns are prepared to reason these issues through in a careful manner.

Implications for Directors of Internship Programs

Throughout this discussion, the goal has not been to prescribe strategies for directors in addressing the ethical issues, but to sensitize directors to the areas where ethical considerations may be part of the dynamics. The purpose of this final section is to recommend some specific tactics which directors might consider.

First, and foremost, as intern directors we should attempt to become knowledgeable of major ethical perspectives, and assess/define our own ethical perspectives. An awareness of our own ethical principles will make us more aware in our decision-making and in helping the decision-making of our interns. We will also be more sensitive to the ethical model we become for our interns, and better able to define our role with the interns concerning ethical questions. In most situations concerning student dilemmas, I prefer to utilize the "principle of least intervention" (Kanfer & Goldsteen, 1975, p. 11) where I attempt to empower the intern to make his/her own decisions by asking questions which help the intern to explore the behavior from different perspectives, while not personally taking on the responsibility for making their decision. This is in line with the ethical perspectives I tend to apply in the decision-making process -- a combination of Buber's dialogic and significant choice political perspective (Johannesen, 1983). I believe this approach also helps the student to develop ethical standards for living beyond that experience. On the other hand, I realize other intern directors may decide to take a more presciptive approach with their interns.

Secondly, as intern directors we have a responsibility to assist our interns to establish ethical guidelines to help in their decision-making. Beyond the ethical considerations demanded of students of communication generally, communication interns often work in areas with inherent ethical concerns such

as sales, speech writing, campaigning, public relations, radio/television news reporting, training, public speaking and personnel. What standards will these interns use in making choices among techniques, strategies, contents, purposes, ideals, etc.?

This help can consist of making reading resources available to the interns. Assigned readings might include a copy of Ottoson's (1982) "Essentials of an ethical corporate climate," or Nash's (1982) twelve questions for examining the ethics of a business decision. Jensen (1970) discusses ethical guidelines which could be a relevant resource for all interns, while Goldman's (1984) article "Ethical Issues on Advertising" might be more relevant to students interning in that area.

Intern directors might consider recommending, or requiring an ethics course prior to the internship experience. Those internship programs which include seminars prior to or during the internship should make ethics a theme or topic for focus.

No ethical guidelines presently exist for communication internship programs. Johannesen (1983) discusses the weaknesses and usefulness of formal codes of ethics. Although there are some drawbacks, the Speech Communication Association could help to narrow problematic areas and educate new persons moving into directing internships by establishing some guidelines for the profession.

Nilsen (1966, p. 7) notes that in "daily living most people are barely aware of the ethical principles that guide them." It

is imperative that as directors of communication internships we demand an awareness for ourselves and our interns. Only then will the judgment of communication ethics be of highest quality within our programs and for our interns.

FOOTNOTE

[1]The primary source of these definitions is Catherine Konsky, ACA Bulletin, 22, 1977.

REFERENCES

Anderson, K. E. (1984).Communication Ethics: The non-participant's role. Southern Speech Communication Journal, XLIX, Spring, 219-228.

Cahn, D.D. (1979). Toward an understanding of successful career placement by undergraduate speech communication departments. Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 30, 46-53.

Downs, C.W., Harper, P., & Hunt, G. (1976). Internships in speech communication. Communication Education, 25, 276-282.

Goldman, A. (1984).Ethical issues in advertising. In T. Regan (Ed.), Just Business, New York: Random House.

Hanson, J. (1984). Internships and the individual: Suggestions for implementing (or improving) an internship program. Communication Education, XXXIII, January, 53-61.

Harper, N.L. (1982). Promoting the department to outside agencies: What do communication students know about what they can do? Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 39, 8-13.

Holley, D.L. (1980). A survey of communication majors after graduation: Implications for more realistic career counseling. Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 34, 49-54.

Howell, W.S. (1982). The Empathic Communicator. California: Wadsworth Publishing.

Hyre, J.M., & Owens, A.W. (1984). Interns: The ivory tower at work. Communication Education, 33, 372-376.

Jamieson, K.M., & Wolvin, A.D. (1976). Non-teaching careers in communication: Implications for the speech communication curriculum. Communication Education, 25, 284-291.

Jensen, J.V. (1970). Perspectives on Oral Communication. Boston: Holbrook Press, Inc.

Jensen, J.V. (1985). Teaching ethics in speech communication. Communication Education. XXXIV, 324-330.

Johannesen, R.L. (1983). Ethics in Human Communication. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Kanfer, F.H. & Goldsteen, A.P. (1975). Helping People Change. New York: Pergamon Press, Inc.

Konsky, C. (1977). Practical guide to development and administration of an internship program: Issues, procedures, forms. Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 22, 15-28.

Mason, G.E. (1985). Coordinating the internship program: The ins and outs of directing interns. Paper presented to the Central States Speech Association convention, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Nash, L.L. (1982). Ethics without the sermon. In D.G. Jones (Ed.), Doing Ethics in Business. Cambridge: Oelgeschlager, Gunn, & Hain, Publishers.

Nilson, T.R. (1966). Ethics of Speech Communication. Indianapolis: The Bobs Merrill Company, Inc.

Ottoson, G.E. (1982). Essentials of an ethical corporate climate. In D.G. Jones (Ed.), Doing Ethics in Business. Cambridge: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Publishers.

Ross, R.G. (1986). Getting an internship program started: developing policies and procedures. Speech Association of Minnesota Journal, 13, 67-72.

Ross, R.G. (1987). Managing the site visit: Communication issues and strategies for internship directors. Paper presented to the Minnesota Association for Field Experience Learning Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Wilson, G.L. (1980). Internship programs: Managing a communication learning laboratory. Association for Communication Adminstration Bulletin, 31, 60-61.

Wolvin, A.D., & Jamieson, K.M. (1974). The internship in speech communication: An alternative instructional strategy. Today's Speech, 3-9.